

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 546

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL ZAGREB

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR PINT YO UR

SUBJECT: TITO CONFIRMS ARREST OF CMINFORMISTS

REF : BELGRADE (NOTAL) 4272; BELGRADE 4418

1. YUGOSLAV PRESIDENT TITO CONFIRMED SEP 12 THAT SOME 30 PEOPLE ARE BING HELD FOR HAVING FORMED AN ILLEGAL COMIN-FORMIST " PARTY. IN A WIDE-RANGING SPEECH AT JESENICA IN SLOVENIA (OTHER ASPECTS SEPTEL) TITO INTROUCED THE TOPIC BY SYAING THAT DESPITE GENERALLY GOOD RESULTS FROM THE MAY 1974 10TH PARTY CONGRESS, THERE REMAINED PEOPLE OPPOSED TO TITS DECISIONS WHO WOULD GO ANOTHER DIRECTION AND, WHILE THERE AREN'T MANY OF THESE "THEY ARE QUITE ACTIVE".

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2. AFTER DIGRESSING TO DISCUSS AN INCREASE IN MARXIST EDUCATION, TITO RETURNED TO THE TOPIC OF THE 10TH CONGRESS AGAIN AND GOT SPECIFIC: "THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE TRYING TO RALLY OTHERS, EITHER COMINFORMISTS, LIBERALS OR VARIOUS OTHERS. THEY HAVE STARTED RAISING THEIR HEADS AGAIN. THE COMINFORMISTS EVEN TRIED TO ORGANIZE SOME SORT OF A PARTY. THESE PEOPLE, SOME THIRTY NOW WILL BE TAKEN BEFORE THE COURT. THEY, SO TO SPEAK, BEFORE OUR EYES AND THANKS TO BLINDNESS AND LACK OF VIGILANCE, EVEN SUCCEEDED IN HOLDING SOME CONGRESS. OF COURSE, THAT CONGRESS WAS MORE FANTASY THAN ANYTHING ELSE, BUT THE FACT IS THAT THEY HAD AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF MATERIAL, PRINTED ABROAD, THAT THEY EVEN CHOSE THEIR LEADERSHIP, AND ITS SECRETARY WAS SUPPOSED TO BE SOME INDIVIDUAL WHO IS OUTSIDE OUR COUNTRY."

3. AS FOR RESPONSIBILITY, TITO WAS UNSPECIFIC. HOWEVER, HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT "IT IS HARD TO KNOW WHO GAVE THE INITIATIVE FOR THIS. THE COURT WILL FIND THAT OUT DURING THE TRIAL". HAVING ALREADY LABELED THE GROUP AS COMINFORMIST, THAT CAN ONLY HAVE AN OMINOUS RING TO THE SOVIETS.

4. IN ANOTHER REFERENCE WHICH WILL SEND SHILLS DOWN MANY BACKS, TITO SAID, "IF WE DO NOT MAINTAIN OUR VIGILANCE, THEN WE WILL AGAIN HAVE TO HAVE, IN A YEAR OR TWO, SOME THING LIKE THE 21ST SESSION" - THIS A REFERENCE TO THE DECEMBER 1971 PLENUM AT KARADJORDJEVO WHEN TITO LOWERED THE BOOM ON THE DISSIDENT CROATIAN PARTY LEADERSHIP AND SET IN TRAIN EVENTS WHICH LED EVENTUALLY TO THE OUSTER OF THE SERBIAN LEADERSHIP AND THE RECENTRALIZATION OF PARTY AUTHORITY.

5. IT IS INTERESTING THAT NOTHING APPEARED ON THIS TOPIC IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA COVERAGE OF TITO'S SPEECH. EMBASSY OFFICERS MONITORED THE LIVE RADIO BROADCAST OF THE SPEECH AND THE PRIME-TIME EVENING TELEVISION NEWS VERSION OF IT. IN BOTH INSTANCES TITO'S VOICE CAME THROUGH DIRECT ONLY PART OF THE TIME, WITH THE REST BEING VOIC-OVER COMMENTATOR SUMMARIES.

6. AS FOR THE TRIAL, YUGOSLAV JOURNALISTS ARE NOW CONFIRMING-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE NOT DENYING - THAT A GROUP NOW IS ON TRIAL IN PEC IN THE KOSOVO. THE NUMBER GENERALLY GIVEN IS 27.

7. SOVIET APPREHENSION OVER THIS TURN OF EVENTS WAS MADE CLEAR BY SOVIET EMBASSY FIRST SECRETARY ALEXI NIKIFOROV WHO SAID AT A SOCIAL FUNCTION SEPT 12 HE WAS AWARE OF THE ARRESTS AND TRIAL. HIS RESPONSE, OBVIOUSLY WELL PREPARED,

HAD THREE POINTS:

A. THE PEOPLE IN QUESTION WERE FOLLOWERS OF RANKOVIC, OF WHOM NIKIFOROV SAID "YOU KNOW, THE FELLOW WHO TRIED TO PUT THE SCREWS ON PEOPLE HERE."

B. THERE IS NO TRUTH WHATSOEVER TO ALLEGATIONS THAT HE GROUP HAS TIES WITH THE SOVIET UNION OR OTHER WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES, OR HAS HAD ANY CONTACT WITH THE EMBASSIES OF THESE COUNTRIES IN BELGRADE. NIKIFOROV SAID THE POLITBUREAU INSTRUCTIONS ON THIS, WHICH HE HAS SEEN, ARE QUITE CLEAR - SINCE BREZHNEV'S 1971 VISIT TO BELGRADE IT HAS BEEN STRICTLY PROHIBITED TO TAKE ANY ACTION WHICH EVEN RISKED GIVING THE APPEARANCE OF OR BEING INTERPRETED AS SUPPORT FOR ANTI-REGIME ELEMENTS IN YUGOSLAVIA. HE SAID HE IS NOT SURPRISED THAT PEOPLE ARE IMPLICATING THE SOVIET UNION, BUT IT SIMPLY IS NOT TRUE. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE OBSERVED WITH A GRIN, HAD THE CHINESE BEEN IMPLICATED IN SOMETHING OF THIS SORT THEY (THE SOVIETS) CERTAINLY WOULD BE THE FIRST TO POINT THE FINGER.

C. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, NIKIFOROV SAID THIS EVENT IS GOING TO DO CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE TO DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS - "IT IS A SERIOUS SETBACK".

8. CONFIRMATION BY TITO HIMSELF OF THE EXISTENCE OF THIS DISSIDENT GROUP, WHICH HE CLEARLY LABELED AS COMINFORMIST, ALMOST CERTAINLY WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON WHAT HAS BEEN AN INCREASINGLY WARM BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION. IN ADDITION, THE REARING OF THE COMINFORM HEAD IN THEIR OWN BACKYARD MAY INFLUENCE HOW THE YUGOSLAVS VIEW ANY CONFERENCE OF COMMUNIST AND WORKERS PARTIES. TOON

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